

Opening Your Doors to Youth



A Guidebook to Creating a Youth Friendly Event

Developed & Adopted by the
Hampton Youth Commission

Approved 03.11.2013.

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Table of Contents

Forward	4
Hampton Youth Commission	5
Introduction.....	6
What is Youth Friendly?	7
Youth Friendly – Background	8
Select a Theme	9
Naming the Event	10
Attractive & Safe	11
Promotions & Marketing	12-14
Expenses	15
Event Guidelines	16
Am I Ready?	17-18



Forward



Everyone Wins!

Each time a youth serving organization decides to host an event they are creating opportunities for youth to learn, grow, and develop. By doing so, your organization is able to reach a large, vocal population of social network users. In addition, organizations that create successful events are influencing positive youth activity and behavior in neighborhoods. When you involve a young person, you are also involving a parent/guardian.

By developing opportunities that appealing to both youth and their parents/guardians, organizations can see increases in participation and fill volunteer needs. The culture of your organization can gain a youthful vibe and create greater potential of knowing what appeals to youth. Youth bring a unique energy and a strong passion to an organization that volunteers of other age groups may lack. As a result, youth, parents/guardians, youth serving organizations, and the City of Hampton benefit when such opportunities are developed and youth are engaged in positive learning activities.

The question remains, not why should you invite young people to your event, but rather why would you not? Why limit yourself to just adults, when teens have so much to offer.

The Hampton Youth Commission



YOUTH VOICE. YOUTH LEADERS. YOUTH, OUR FUTURE.

The Hampton Youth Commission (HYC) is a board appointed by City Council to provide leadership, policy guidance and to be a voice for Hampton Youth. The Commission consists of 25 members from across the City of Hampton.

Criteria to join the HYC include the following:

- ☐ Good academic standing
- ☐ Entering the ninth ^(9th) through twelfth ^(12th) grades in the fall of that year (if there are vacant positions on the Youth Commission, rising seniors may fill the positions.)
- ☐ Residents of Hampton during their service on the Hampton Youth Commission.

The mission of HYC is “Young People with the Power and Voice to shape the Future of Hampton.” The HYC is dedicated to making Hampton the most livable city in Virginia for teens. They are responsible for retaining, preserving and maintaining the Hampton Community Plan’s Youth Component, a policy guide for the City of Hampton in prioritizing issues that impact youth.

For more information on how to get involved with the HYC please email youthcom@hampton.gov or visit www.hampton.gov.

Introduction



IT'S NO SECRET. Teenagers love having things to do and places to go and it is important that there are available opportunities for them to do so. The main questions brought up when planning a youth event are:

- Where do I begin?
- How do I make it an attractive and safe environment?
- How do I get the word out?
- How much should it cost?
- When do I know I am ready?

The Hampton Youth Commission set out to find clear answers to these questions with a focus on event for youth in the age group of 13-17.

Why was this guide developed?

In order to achieve a more Youth Friendly city, people need to know how to host “youth friendly” events. The more successfully held youth events will contribute to making “Hampton the most livable city in Virginia” for teenagers.



What is “Youth Friendly?”



A lack of things to do is has been identified as major concern to young people in Hampton. Young people say there are not enough youth-centered activities or events in the city. Youth also claim that even when there are events aimed at attracting youth, they fall short for various reasons, such as, uncleanliness, inappropriate mixing of age groups, and the cost. Ultimately these factors make the events to not be “youth friendly.”

“Youth friendly” is a phrase used to describe any event, business, or location that is affordable, youth-orientated, clean, accessible to a wide range of teenagers, safe, and ...most importantly... fun.

“Youth Friendly” - Background

During the 2011-2012 school year, the Hampton Youth Commission chose one of the eight (8) goals of the Youth Component “Places to go and things to do” as their main focus. The Commission engaged in an exercise to find out what it takes for a business or location to be Youth Friendly.



The Commission visited areas in Hampton, such as Peninsula Town Center and Hampton Town Center in order to develop a sense of what attracts teenagers. These sites were chosen because they were places where teens spend most of their time and money in Hampton. The Commission also toured other cities in Virginia, such as Fredericksburg to confirm what they thought was considered a Youth Friendly environment and to get an idea of what other cities were doing to attract youth.

As part of this exercise, the Commission rated each location and business in Peninsula Town Center according to the Youth Friendly definition that the Commission established. Most of the businesses were found to be youth friendly. These Youth Friendly businesses were sent a letter of recognition acknowledging their efforts in having an affordable, clean, safe, and accessible environment for the young people of Hampton. Young people were also informed of the youth friendly businesses.

Select a Theme

When it comes to planning a successful event: a purpose, concept, and theme are chosen.

Purpose: The purpose is the reason why your event exists. What do you wish to accomplish by holding it? Remember not to lose sight of your purpose when decisions are made and the event is being planned.

Concept: The concept is how you go about reaching your purpose. You know your purpose; the concept is how you are going to obtain it.

Theme: The theme of an event sets the overall mood and tone. Themes make the event more interesting, and lure the audience in. Themes can engage and encourage the group to participate more in the event.

Example: A cheerleading team wants to raise money for new uniforms. Their purpose is to earn money for new uniforms. The cheerleaders that want to raise money are going to host a car wash in order to raise the money; their concept is a car wash. The cheerleaders that hosted the car wash in order to raise money also centered the fundraiser on football. Meaning, the people who wish to participate in the fundraiser could wear their favorite jerseys or other football related items.



Name the Event

All events require a title. The title can determine which age groups will be attracted to your event. Different or Unexpected names will create curiosity among the youth, likely increasing the attendance.

Who's invited?

Choosing which age groups attend your event is vital. Older teens are less likely to attend an event if younger teens are present. Most youth-gearred events are open to all ages starting from middle school, unless stated otherwise. It is important that the age group targeted for your event is clear.

YOUTH TIP!

When naming your event, refrain from using words such as “night” or “teen”. Using these words can make the event seem unappealing, and can result in low attendance. Remember teens want to be treated as if they are adults. Titling your event with a nonspecific name, which does not single out youth in it, will receive a more positive response.



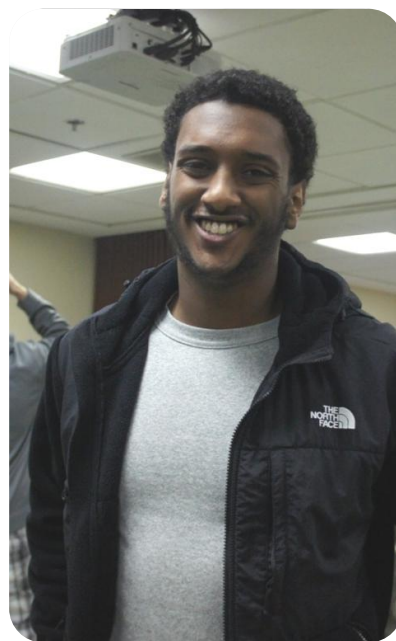
Attractive & Safe Location

Location, Location, Location... Choosing a location for your event is essential. Three key factors that should help determine the location you choose are accessibility, activity, and appearance.

Choosing the best location depends on the type of event that you are hosting. Hosting an event outside can be ideal because of its open space to hold a large amount of teens and freedom to do a wide range of activities. Weather conditions and safety may influence if the event is held outside. Indoor venues should be selected based upon the size of the space to accommodate guests and cost.

Keeping It Safe: Safety is crucial, especially at a teen event. Security and event personnel should be available at all times. Teens appreciate independence, but will also enjoy a feeling of security provided by staff and safety personnel at the event.

Cleaning Up: Whether the event is held outdoors or indoors, it is important that the location is clean before, during, and after the event is held. This can be accomplished by placing recycling and trash bins throughout the area in order to encourage teens to appropriately dispose of their garbage. If teenagers see trash lying around, or empty bottles, they are less likely to dispose of their own trash appropriately.



YOUTH TIP!

Clean, safe, and fun are the key ingredients to choosing a great location for your Youth Friendly event. Make sure you take all of these into consideration, or your location may not be ideal for many teens - defeating your overall purpose!

Promotions & Marketing



You decided on a purpose, picked a theme, chose an age group, and selected an awesome location. Now what? You've reached the most important step: Getting teens interested in your event!

Teens have short attention spans and it is necessary that you get your point across in a timely manner, but do not worry, it is possible! Be short and straight to the point. Remember that teens want to feel like adults and like they have the freedom of choice. To motivate them to come to your event, as opposed to giving them the idea that they have to attend. Use words that describe the benefits of your event.

Don't Forget about Timing!!!

If you hear of a school event, or popular youth event going on, try not to schedule your event during the same time. For example, if you were going to throw an 'Almost Time for Graduation' party for seniors in May, remember that they will be preparing for prom, and are less likely to be available to attend your event

Promotions & Marketing



Sports and Clubs: Many young people are involved in some type of activity whether it is a club, a job, a sport, or a church organization. Due to busy schedules, it is important that you inform them of your event beforehand and give reminders so they do not forget.

YOUTH TIP!

You may think of lunch as a great opportunity to advertise, but during school hours, lunch is only 30 minutes for most teens.

Teens like to take advantage of this break by eating and conversing with friends. So, it may not be wise to bombard them with the details of your event during this time.

Schools: Schools are an effective way to spread information to youth, since they are there for so many hours each day. Announcements regarding game days, club meetings, and/or field trips are usually aired on the intercom, so why not add your event to the list for all to hear? Remember to get your announcements approved by the school's administrator first!

Flyers/Posters: Handing out flyers and posting visuals will make your event stand out more to the youth. If your flyer contains a visual with photos of people in it, the photos should be a representation of your targeted audience.

Promotions & Marketing

Word of Mouth: Of course, word of mouth will always be the most reliable way of exposing the details of your event. Let a few people of your targeted audience know, and get them excited about it, so that they will tell their friends; their friends may post about it, and eventually everyone will know!

Social Media: An alternative to advertising during lunch might be advertising with social media. This generation is all about connecting through social networks, and if you would ask most teens if they use them, the majority would say yes. Using social media networks to advertise will widely spread your event among teens.



YOUTH TIP!

Social media casts a wide net for potential youth attendees. It can help the youth serving organization expand its network. Social media is free for users and can be easy to use. If assistance is needed to use social media, a teenage volunteer could assist with frequent updating.

Expenses

What should it cost?

Teenagers tend to be greatly limited in the money they have to spend but are usually free to spend it as they choose. The more expensive an event, the less likely teenagers will attend. While it is understandable that many events require charging some type of fee, it is important to remember that teens are living on a tight budget. In order to have a successful event, it must be of little to no cost to youth.

Admission: Marketing free admissions will appeal to many teens. Some events such as casual dances, local artist concerts, park parties, or watching a movie at a theatre require an admission fee which should not exceed \$15. This will ensure that the price is affordable for youth which could increase their attendance and participation. There are a few exceptions to this rule. If your event happens to be formal, extremely popular, have a special guest or a national celebrity, a higher price is reasonable.

Food & Entertainment: One thing teens love more than updating their social network feed is FREE delicious food. Food will definitely attract young people to your event. Of course, as discussed in the previous section, all things cannot be free. Food at your event should not be more than \$10 - \$15. This amount should include a main dish, side, and drink. Remember that even snack foods such as chips, cookies, and small drinks are enjoyable. Snacks should be kind to a teen's pocket.

If your event features games, rides, or any other form of entertainment; be mindful of these prices too! If a ride or game is too expensive, teens will be more likely to attend another event where the entertainment is cheaper or even free!



Event Guidelines



Guidelines are set to keep things in order and, more importantly, to keep everyone safe. Without guidelines for your event, things could get hectic. As a result, examples of useful guidelines are described below.

Inappropriate behavior: An event for youth is not an appropriate place for weapons, drugs, alcohol, sexual activity or fighting should not be permitted at your event. Make it clear that your event is not a place for such behavior and can easily be accomplished by setting a zero tolerance policy for fighting at any time.

Example: A zero tolerance policy for inappropriate behavior can be indicated at the bottom of the advertisement you create.

Event personnel should visit bathrooms or any areas within the venue that frequently to ensure none Your event should be safe and orderly. Respect should be given equally to the youth, event staff, and any other personnel. Teens do not want to be considered childish, but there should still be a limit (PG-13) on what they should be exposed to.

YOUTH TIP!

Do not forget to state your guidelines before your event starts. You can even include specific guidelines such as “Recycling at this event is mandatory” or “Wear your nametag at all times”. Different events require different instructions, so make sure you make the directions clear.

Am I ready?

Read the Guidebook: Now that you have finished reading the Guidebook to Creating a Youth Friendly Event, you are fully prepared to host your own event for young people. It is important that you go by the useful tips provided within this guide, but it is important to add your own creativity!

Allowing young people to assist in planning your event is a great way to know what youth look for when attending an event. Do not be afraid to ask their opinion! Who else would be an expert on teens, but teens themselves?

Complete the Checklist: This checklist will keep you and your event on the Youth Friendly track. If you have any hesitations about whether or not your event qualifies, simply just take the time to ask yourself the following questions:

- ☐ Do I have a purpose, theme, and concept?
- ☐ Does my event have a name that will attract teens?
- ☐ Is my event age specific? Is the age group made clear?
- ☐ Have I chosen a safe, accessible, attractive, and clean location?
- ☐ Are my methods of advertising reasonable? Are teens giving me positive feedback about attending the event?
- ☐ When advertising, am I utilizing the various social networks that many young people use on a daily basis?
- ☐ Am I working with schools to spread the word about my event?
- ☐ Is my event affordable? Can the average teenager purchase something at my event?
- ☐ Will a young person be content with my admission fees?
- ☐ Is there food and entertainment at my event?
- ☐ Have I set guidelines that do not make the event seem childish, yet keep things in order?
- ☐ Do I have youth helping with the planning of my event?



I'm Ready!



Hold your Youth-Friendly Event: Did you find yourself nodding “Yes” to all of the above? If so, great! You have successfully earned yourself a Youth Friendly badge. If you answered “No” to one or more, do not worry. Use the previous pages to find out how you can improve.

Thanks to you, teens will have the ability to enjoy more youth-centered events, and have the ability to engage in a wide range of fun activities.

